

June 3, 2019

Chairman Frank Pallone Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Greg Walden
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Roger Wicker
Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Maria Cantwell
Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Pallone and Wicker and Ranking Members Walden and Cantwell,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing interests across rural America, we write in opposition to any renewal of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization (STELAR). STELAR – which serves to enable and incentivize major satellite television providers to neglect some of America’s most rural communities – ought to be put out to pasture at the end of this year, as intended.

The policies of STELAR – first enacted before the rise of even the early Internet – have been surpassed by technological advances and now cause affirmative harm to our rural communities. Rural Americans rely on local broadcasting for critical information and news about our local communities and, especially when we are out in the field, up-to-the minute weather and emergency information. This is critical local information not only for the productivity of our lands, but also for the safety of our livestock and families. Yet, because of STELAR, major satellite television providers are carrying television stations from outside these rural areas rather than the local stations themselves.

Just as local broadcasting brings us together and provides a lifeline service when we need it most, our organizations applaud your Committees’ attention and work in crafting solutions to close the rural broadband divide. While we are all proud of our traditions and way of life in rural America, we also recognize that we live in an increasingly connected economy. Broadband connectivity is critical to our futures, but local broadcast television is part of our heartland’s past, present and future. As your Committees begin consideration of the video marketplace, we urge you not to extend this decades-old satellite law but instead to make closing the digital divide your top priority.

Sincerely,



American Agri-Women



American Dairy Coalition



Agricultural Retailers Association



National Association of Wheat Growers



National Black Growers Council



National Farmers Union



Rural & Agriculture Council of America



United States Cattlemen's Association



Women Involved in Farm Economics



Intertribal Agriculture Council